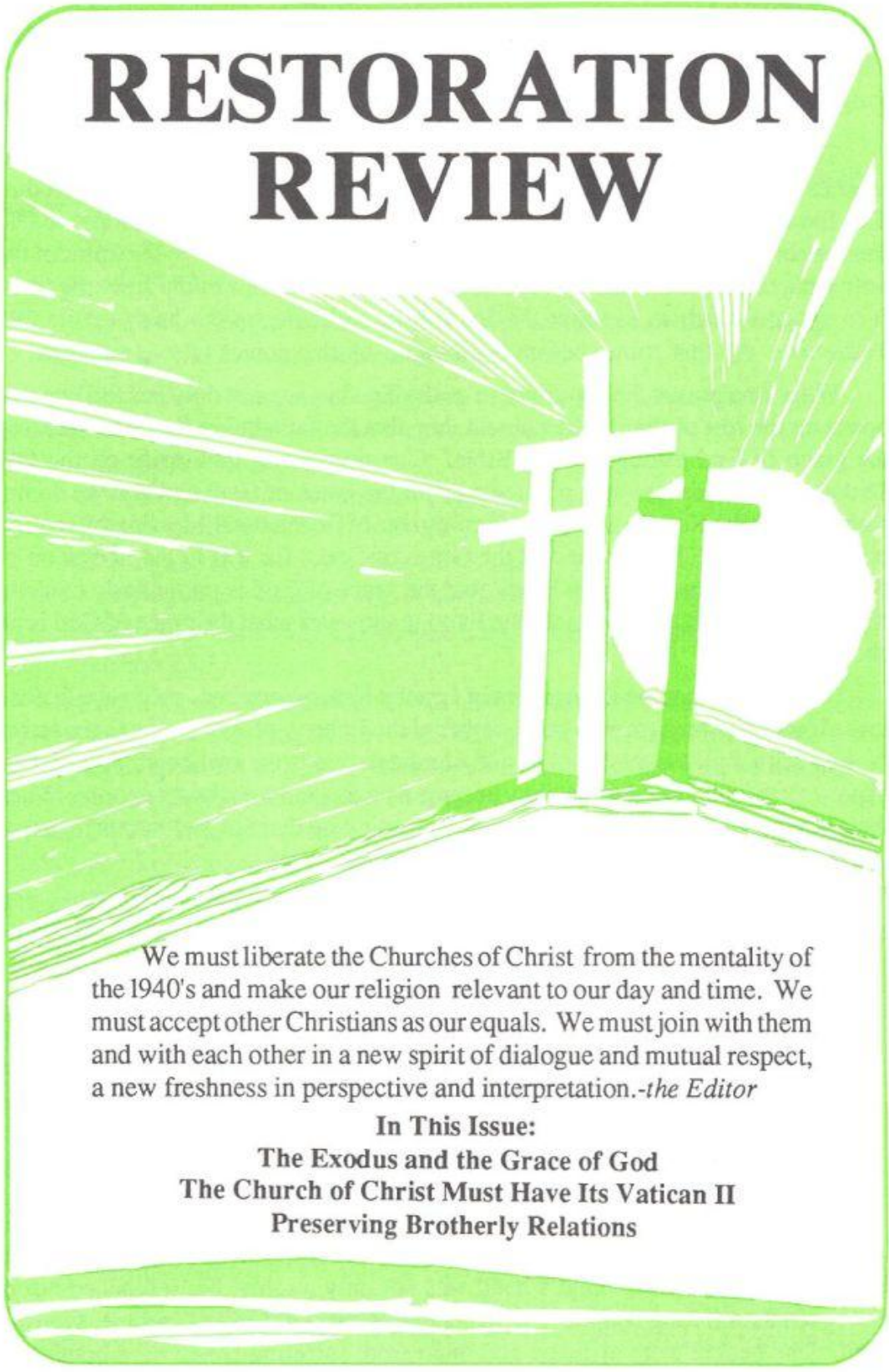
RESTORATION REVIEW



We must liberate the Churches of Christ from the mentality of the 1940's and make our religion relevant to our day and time. We must accept other Christians as our equals. We must join with them and with each other in a new spirit of dialogue and mutual respect, a new freshness in perspective and interpretation.-*the Editor*

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What the Old Testament Means to Us. . . No.5

THE EXODUS AND THE GRACE OF GOD

The story the Old Testament tells really begins with the Exodus, a story that reaches its climax in the exile to Babylon and the return, which is the second exodus. The Exodus and the Exile are thus the two center poles for the canopy of Old Testament study. To change the metaphor, these two events are the linchpins of the unfolding drama of the history of Israel, for they hold the rest of the story together. It is not too much to say that the Exodus in particular is the heart of the Old Testament. All that comes before is prologue, all that comes after is epilogue.

When one grasps the significance of the Exodus, she not only has the key that opens up the rest of the Old Testament, but also the foundation for understanding the grace of God throughout the Bible. One purpose of this series on the Old Testament is to see how it is permeated with the grace of God, and that we do not have to await the New Testament to see the grace of God in the Bible. We thus entitle this installment “The Exodus and the Grace of God,” for it is in the liberation of God’s people from slavery in Egypt that the grace of God is particularly evident. Next to the gift of Christ himself, the Exodus shows us what the grace of God is all about.

It is evident that the interpreters of Israel’s history attached such significance to the Exodus. Abraham may be the father of the Hebrew people and even the father of their faith, but it is the Exodus, not Abraham, that is the real beginning of their history. It is in the Exodus that they became a nation and a covenant people. When their prophets called them to repentance by reminding them of their heritage, it was to the deliverance from Egypt that they appealed.

There is one passage, Dt. 26:5-9, where the entire drama of the Exodus is reduced to a few verses and with striking detail:

> You shall answer and say to the Lord your God: “My father was a Syrian, about to perish, and he went down to Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. But the Egyptians mistreated us, afflicted us, and laid hard bondage on us. Then we cried out to the Lord God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression. So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.”

This passage overflows with the grace of God, especially in the reference to God's outstretched arm. God's hand was not only mighty, but it reached out in mercy to His suffering people. The writer extols only God, not the people. God did it all. The people were afflicted and oppressed, suffering from "hard bondage." What did they do for themselves? Nothing. All they could do was to cry out to God for help. The terror, signs, and wonders are all God's. God "looked" upon their affliction and the Exodus became a reality. This is one of the most graceful passages of all Scripture.

This theme runs all through the Old Testament, pointing to the Exodus as the heart of the drama:

> Then the Angel of the Lord said, "I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers. " *(Judges* 2:1)
>
> I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to what I did among them. Afterwards I brought them out. *(Joshua* 24:5)
>
> The Lord who brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power and an outstretched arm, Him you shall fear. (*2 Kgs*. 17:36)
>
> I am the Lord your God,
>
> Who brought you out of the land of Egypt;
>
> Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it. (*Ps*. 81:10)
>
> It was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite. (*Amos* 2:10)
>
> When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son. (*Hosea* 11:1)

The prophets were always mindful that Israel's covenant relationship with God began at the Exodus, as in *Haggai* 2:5, "According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My spirit remains among you; do not fear!" When Jeremiah prophesied of a new covenant to come, he related it to the Exodus covenant, "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord" (Jer. 31:31).

Again, the grace of God is evident in all these passages. God was the deliverer at the Exodus, "with his outstretched hand." The enslaved Hebrews were powerless before the Egyptians. Moreover, the God of Israel is a covenant-making God who never breaks His

covenant. God's grace is seen in His faithfulness. The people broke the covenant, but not God. The covenant given at the Exodus was not "weak" in itself, but only in that the people because of their fallenness could not keep it perfectly. Both the old and new covenants were expressions of God's grace, but the new covenant was the fuller measure of grace because it was based upon Jesus Christ.

The stirring drama that we call the Exodus is told in the book that bears that name, especially chapters 1-14. The protagonist is Yahweh, Israel's God, who intervenes on behalf of helpless slaves who are terribly oppressed in a foreign land, a people He has chosen as His own. The antagonist is the Pharaoh of Egypt, the mightiest emperor of his time, who also claims the people as his own property. Yahweh is also challenging the gods of Egypt. The two main characters are thus in a confrontation as to who is in command, the gods of Egypt or the God of the Hebrews. There were two chief sources of divinity to the Egyptians, the Nile river, which was the country's life blood, and the Pharaoh himself who was believed to be an offspring of Amun-Ra, the sun god. While the Egyptians worshiped nature, the Hebrews believed that Yahweh ruled over all nature.

This helps us to understand the plagues that Yahweh imposed upon the Egyptians. The first plague that turned the Nile into blood contested the divinity of the great river, as did the second plague of frogs that emanated from the river and worked havoc among the people. Other plagues, such as the lice (ticks), boils, flies, and death attacked Pharaoh himself, threatening his bodily well-being. Other plagues, such as the locusts, hail, and the death of livestock, threatened the economy of the land, supposedly protected by the Pharaoh's divinity.

In reading the book of Exodus we see that the story it tells is more than a series of events leading to the liberation of a band of slaves from bondage. It is interpreted as a divine event. God is at work in human history. It is the beginning of the formation of God's covenant community. The Exodus was thus an act of God's grace. The Hebrews were not only freed from their captivity but they became God's redeemed people. So, the Exodus story is not history as we would write history, for it is a narration of the "mighty acts" of the Lord which he performed "with an outstretched arm." It is not ordinary history but His-story . Yahweh himself is always the main character. He is always present and always in charge.

God's grace is especially evident in the summons of Moses to leave his quiet, pastoral life and return to Egypt and confront Pharaoh in behalf of the oppressed Hebrews. The story of the burning bush is one of the great masterpieces of the Bible (Ex. 3). The theologians call it a theophany, an instance of the appearance of God. It should be read, as if on one's knees, with awe, reverence, and imagination. One should not try to rationalize

the burning bush as if to capture it through the objective lens of a camera. It is the poetry of God. God speaks to the curious shepherd leaning upon his staff, “Moses, Moses. . .” It was a moment when all of heaven and earth must have waited in silence. “I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”

Moses hid his face; he was afraid to look upon God. God had prepared him for such a moment. Though reared and educated as an Egyptian prince and warrior, he was always mindful of the plight of his enslaved kinsmen. He had fled from Egypt after killing a slavedriver for cruelty toward a Hebrew. God knew that the heart of Moses was deeply moved by the distress of his people enslaved in Egypt all those years. God brought the right man and the right time together. He had waited 430 years to act, but now His grace would be abundant.

Notice how the verbs of action are endowed with grace, words that reveal divine intention: “I *have seen* the affliction of my people … I *have heard* their cry … I *know* their sufferings … I *have come down to deliver* them” (Ex. 3:7-8).

That great line “I have come down to deliver them” is as good a description of grace as one will find. Emanuel! God is with us! Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity. It is a dramatic instance of how God’s revelation is made known. through events, and of how his grace is poured out when His people are the most helpless.

We are not to interpret Moses’ protests to the call to go to Egypt as an unwillingness to do God’s bidding or even as weakness on his part. If anyone knew the power of Egypt it was Moses, and he knew he was incapable of such a task. After all, it must have been the most astonishing commission ever given to mortal man, “Come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” It is understandable that the now aged and lowly shepherd would respond with, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?”

It must have also blown his mind that he was not only to deliver Israel from Egypt, but to bring them to the very mountain where he then stood in the presence of God. It must have been reassuring to Moses when God told him that he would be with him in Egypt, but it was not enough. He wanted God to reveal to him His name. This was his way of trying to penetrate the mystery of God, for the people of antiquity believed that a name, human or divine, revealed the character of the one who bore it.

This is the beginning of the name Yahweh for God (rendered Lord in the KJV), often used in Scripture, drawn from the four consonants YHWH, the name that God gave to Moses when he asked for His name. He was God, the creator of heaven and earth, but his

name was YHWH, which meant “I AM WHO I AM” or simply “I AM.” It is staggering in its import; we can hardly begin to comprehend what it means.

Moses is still insecure about his mission. God assures him that “with signs and wonders” the job will be done. He at last grows impatient with Moses when he protests that he does not have the eloquence of speech to stand before Pharaoh. “Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing? Is it not I, Yahweh?,” God says to him, now using the newly revealed name. But God continues to be gracious, naming Aaron, Moses’ brother, as his spokesman. It is impressive that God solved the problem in that way, not by giving His envoy a new and powerful tongue, but by naming another to speak for him.

Some of the things that follow are baffling. God warns Moses that Pharaoh will not let the people go, and this is because “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart.” It also says, time and again, as the plagues come and go, that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. This may mean that while Pharaoh was proud, stubborn, and unwilling to yield to any deity beside himself, his hand was forced by Yahweh. It does not mean that Pharaoh was forced to act contrary to his own nature.

Equally baffling is that when Moses began to do the signs and wonders designed to influence Pharaoh, the Egyptian magicians were able to do the same, including the first two plagues. When Moses turned his staff into a serpent, the magicians did the same. When Moses turned the waters into blood or something that looked like blood (the Bible even says the moon will be turned into blood), the magicians did likewise. And when Moses summoned the frogs, so did the magicians. But that was it, for when Moses brought the gnats or lice, the magicians tried but couldn’t, perhaps because they were too small to manipulate. This is when they conceded to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God” (Ex. 8:19), which was not a confession that they believed in Yahweh, but that it was something supernatural and beyond their own power.

If we think it strange that the magicians would have such power, it is not all that different from stories missionaries tell even today about the miraculous power of witch doctors in places like Indonesia. Call it demonic power or what you will, it is evident that God allows “lying wonders,” a biblical term, as part of the drama between the forces of good and evil. The Exodus story makes it clear that Pharaoh’s magicians had to check out, however impressive they usually were, for they could not only not produce gnats like Moses did, but the flies, disease of the livestock, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, and the death of the first born were all too much for them as well as for Pharaoh.

It is interesting to follow Pharaoh's diminishing rebellion. He was at first fully entrenched in his refusal to let the people go, but plague by plague he weakens. By the fourth plague (flies) he is ready to compromise, but not much. If the people must go and sacrifice, they can do so if they stay within the confines of Egypt (Ex. 8:25). Moses of course rejects this. By the time the locusts begin to devour the land (eighth plague), he compromises further. They can leave the land if they must, but only the men, not the women and children (Ex. 10:7). When Moses rejects this and calls for the plague of darkness, Pharaoh makes a third compromise. All the people may go, but leave the cattle behind (Ex. 10:24). This is when Moses made that great statement that is a lesson all to itself, "Not a hoof shall be left behind."

One of our old pioneer preachers made that one of his favorite sermons, and with good reason. Pharaoh is the devil who keeps trying to compromise with us in our determination to serve God fully. He is willing for us to be "religious" if we stay "in the land," within his domain. If we are determined to be more religious than that, then we can go ahead but don't get the family involved. If the devil can keep the children, he'll settle for that. If the old Deceiver has to give further ground, he allows us to go ahead and take our families if we must, but don't take your purse along when you are baptized. "Not a hoof shall be left behind!," the old preacher would boom forth. And good for him, for he drew upon one of the great lessons of the Exodus. And it was Moses, not Aaron, who said it, not so weak in speech by then. Can't you just hear Moses nail Pharaoh right between the eyes with, "Not a hoof shall be left behind." It is one of the great lines of the Bible. No compromises with Satan!

So, every hoof was taken, along with every man, woman and child, as well as much confiscated wealth, as the children of Israel left "the house of bondage" a free people. Pharaoh, proud and obdurate to the end, changed his mind and pursued them as far as the Red Sea. There his army met with catastrophe as "the horse and the rider were cast into the sea." Yahweh was victorious over the gods of the Nile and the sun god as personified in Pharaoh. The Israelites now had every reason to believe in Him and to follow His plan for them to the end.

If that great Old Testament scholar of bygone days, W. F. Albright, was right, it was Rameses II that Moses went before and made that epoch-making request, "Let my people go." The date was 1290 B.C. It was a pivotal event in the history of God's people, and crowned with His grace.

They would wander for a full generation in the wilderness so that God could speak to their hearts tenderly, as one of the prophets put it. But eventually they were brought to the foot of smoking, shaking Mt. Sinai, where God told Moses He would bring them. Sinai

was what the Exodus was all about, for it was there that they formally became God's covenant community. It was there that they received the (old) covenant, to be distinguished from the Old Testament, which were writings that grew out of the covenant community.

And it was that community people, ratified at Sinai by receiving a covenant, expressed in the Ten Commandments written upon tables of stone, that was destined to give the Christ to the world.

There had to be bondage in Egypt before there could be an Exodus; there had to be an Exodus before there could be a Sinai; there had to be a Sinai before there could be a covenant community, selected from among all the nations of the earth. And there had to be a covenant community before there could be Jesus Christ.

So, what does the Exodus mean to us? It was the grace of God at work creating for us the hope that we have in Jesus Christ. He is our Exodus, our liberator. And when he calls, "Let my people go," our response is always, "Not a hoof shall be left behind!" Praise the name of Yahweh, the great I AM!—*the Editor*

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WHEN LOVE OBSTRUCTS PARTY ACTION

There is a sad but interesting story coming out of the "Conservative" Churches of Christ, the term they use to describe themselves. The other Churches of Christ often caricature them as "the Anti's" or, less judgmentally, the "anti-Herald of Truth" churches. "Institutional" and "non-institutional" are also used in making distinctions. These labels! They probably say more about the one using them than the one they are used on.

This "Conservative" wing represents a group of sisters and brothers that are now completely separated from the "mainline" Churches of Christ, and there is no longer any fellowship between them. They have their own college, lectureships, journals, mission programs, and their own list of "faithful" churches. And of course they have their own elite leadership, along with a few patriarchs that were around when the group first began to emerge in the early 1950's. These patriarchs were once leaders in the mainline churches, but when the fallout began they came out on the conservative side, for conscience sake of course. The sad story I refer to concerns one of these patriarchs, if not *the* patriarch of the clan, a beloved brother named Homer Hailey. There is no reason for me to withhold his name since he has recently attained ubiquity in their own press as a controversial figure, even as an unfaithful brother and a false teacher.

I knew Homer Hailey, now 87, as a professor at Abilene Christian and as minister to the Highland Church of Christ in Abilene in the early 1940's. That was before division came that created liberals and conservatives. I suspect Homer would say that he believes about "the issues" (having to do with church cooperation) what he has always believed, that he has not changed, that it is the "liberals" that have changed by introducing innovations such as the Herald of Truth cooperative radio-TV program. The mainline left him; he didn't leave it. It is ironic, however, that the very church where he was once the minister became the focal point of the controversy in that it was the sponsoring church of the Herald of Truth project.

The dispute has been over methodology, the conservatives insisting that "the sponsoring church" (with hundreds of churches working under the aegis of one church and one eldership) is an innovation and unscriptural. They are of course right as conservatives always are, if right means opposing innovations. At one time Churches of Christ had no "Sunday School" churches. When the Sunday School was introduced, it was an innovation. The "conservatives" this time became our non-Sunday School churches. Instrumental music was an innovation, as was "lesson leaves," plurality of communion cups (which old J. W. McGarvey adamantly opposed), the one-man pastor, and on and on it goes.

I recall how stunned I was by a charge laid on me by one of my professors at Harvard, who considered me quite conservative, "If you ever meet anyone who is to your right, you should examine his position." That could be translated to say: Don't ever debate with anyone who is more conservative than yourself. He will win!

There is nothing wrong in the church having its liberals and conservatives, for we always have had, even from the beginning. The issue is not as much who is right as much as how we are going to treat each other when we differ. Both sides or all sides could be right, depending on conscience. Paul seems to be saying this in Rom. 14. We are to embrace each other in the loving fellowship of the Holy Spirit in spite of differences over methods and opinions. It is in the essentials of the faith, particularly in the person of Christ, that we find our oneness.

This means we should never have divided over Herald of Truth or Sunday Schools or instrumental music, and all the rest. We can have churches that support Herald of Truth (and never watch it!) and those who are opposed to it (who never miss it!). We can have Sunday School churches (half of whom never attend!) and non-Sunday School churches. We can have churches that use an instrument and those who are opposed. All such diversity is possible in "the unity of the Spirit" if we hold forth the Head who is Christ. Even if we are in separate congregations for conscience sake, we can still love and accept

each other and work together in areas of agreement. We all agree much more than we disagree!

Now that I have declared my position on this controversy that now reflects a half-century of party strife among our folk, you will understand that I view Homer Hailey as I always have, a beloved and respected brother in the Lord, and I couldn't care less what his position is on "this issue" or "that issue." That he holds forth the Head, which he has always done, is what matters to me. I don't take sides. I accept as part of the fellowship of the Spirit all those who are in Christ- and we don't have to agree on everything in order to be in fellowship.

But the fact remains that brother Hailey ended up, intentionally or otherwise, on the conservative side of the "institutional" issue. For upwards of forty years he has worked tirelessly among these churches, always a great preacher and teacher among them, and loved and respected as such. His has had a deserved popularity. He would have been equally appreciated among the mainline churches if lines had not been drawn. The evil of partyism!

That forms the basis of the tragedy that unfolds. All these years Homer Hailey has been a kind of patriarch among the conservative segment, loved, admired, and widely used. But he is now in his old age rejected by a substantial portion of their leadership. He is written up in their papers as unfaithful and as a false teacher. The editors and preachers are after him, some urging him to recant, others challenging him to debate. The problem is that he has changed his mind—or has only recently made plain in a book what he has always believed—on the divorce and remarriage issue. This is another line-drawing issue among our conservative brethren.

What is happening to brother Hailey is typical of party religion and party politics. A person is seldom loved for his own sake but because of his loyalty to the party. A party loves only its own. It is true in politics. I have often laughed at the joke about Texas' own LBJ. When some Disciples of Christ suggested that the former president be honored as a luminary in the Christian Church, some demurred, saying, "But LBJ is an S.O.B.?" "Yes," the others conceded, "but he is our S.O.B.!" In our sects that kind of language may not be used, but the spirit is the same. A man can have questionable ethics, but he is loved, accepted, and defended so long as he is what the party calls "sound" and "faithful"—which refers not to the person's Christlikeness but to his loyalty to "the issues."

Brother Hailey is a special kind of problem to the conservatives in that he has not only been "faithful" to the issues but also Christlike—a combination all too rare in party leadership! In short, they love him, and how do you batter and bruise someone that you love? All these years the conservative editors have had no problem in putting down other

brethren they have often named as heretics, whether Ketcherside, Garrett, Hook, or Fudge, because they don't love these men. But brother Hailey they love.

So, our conservative brethren have a new "issue." It is what to do with Homer Hailey, their own guru (a good word!) who has "betrayed" the party by taking a "liberal" view on divorce and remarriage. He dares to say that the divorced (and remarried) who would come to God (the title of his book) may do so without breaking up their marriage. This makes him a false teacher!

This statement by editor J. T. Smith of *Gospel Truths* is an example of what we in Churches of Christ have allowed partyism to do to us: "I am afraid that a number of brethren have allowed their love for brother Hailey to 'color' their judgment." He goes on to say that if it had been him instead of Hailey teaching this "false doctrine" that he would have been rebuked and disfellowshipped. In other words, Hailey is loved more, and this spares him the wrath of some party leaders. Brother Smith is at least consistent. If one is a "false teacher"—and this appears to be anyone who does not agree with the party issues—he is to be disfellowshipped, whether you love him or not.

Others in this group have difficulty attaining brother Smith's consistency. Ed Harrell, for example, insists that he can go on fellowshiping brother Hailey even though he disagrees with him on the divorce and remarriage issue. Ed has one category of differences where fellowship is possible, such as pacifism and the woman's head covering, and another category where differences make fellowship impossible, such as the "liberal/institutional" issue, the party's *raison d'etre.* And brother Harrell, unlike most of the group's leaders, puts the divorce/remarriage issue in the first category.

But even brother Harrell is accused of allowing love to muddle his thinking. Another writer in the same journal, Dudley Ross Spears, tells how Harrell and others debated the Hailey issue at the recent Florida College Lectures, which appeared to be, he says, a contest on who loves brother Hailey the most.

We have here a unique problem for one of our Church of Christ parties. Love is a problem. It is keeping some of them from doing what they usually do—axe a brother when he veers from the party line. But some remain "faithful" and "loyal," and they have no problem in branding brother Hailey "a false teacher" and drawing the line of fellowship.

We may learn several things from this sad episode. It may well be true that love does and should "hide a multitude of sins," as the Scriptures say, and that if we loved more we would condemn less. One is tempted to conclude that if our conservative brethren loved the rest of us like they love brother Hailey there would be less rejection.

And yet Editor Smith has a point in that we cannot allow love to blind us to what would be injurious to the Body of Christ. But can't we have different views on a question like divorce and remarriage without drawing lines and applying labels? Can't a person be honestly mistaken without being a false teacher? In the Bible the false teacher is not one who is simply wrong, but one who is factious and bent upon dividing the Body for his own selfish ends. No person who is sincerely searching for truth is a false teacher.

If these brethren are right in the tight way they wind things, then there is no hope for greater unity and fellowship among our people. If each party demands that we see their own set of "issues" the way they do before there can be fellowship, then we are doomed to be forever divided. If the only "faithful" churches and "sound" preachers are those that toe some party line—and do we not have umpteen different parties?—then we will continue to have multiple sects, each claiming to be the one true church.

If on the other hand we recognize that the unity for which our Lord prayed, which is a reconciled diversity, then we can love and accept each other even as Christ has accepted us, like it says in Rom. 15:7. And how were you when Christ accepted you—right about every detail?

These brethren—indeed, all of us—must realize that sincere, intelligent people are going to see some thing differently, including our select issues. Editor Smith, in the same paper referred to above, says, "God has made plain His teaching on divorce and remarriage." If this is so why do two good, smart men like him and Homer Hailey not see it alike? Why does brother Hailey have to write a book about it if it is all that plain, and why does brother Smith have to use half of an issue of his journal answering brother Hailey?

It may be that we can agree on what the Bible actually says, but we can't always agree on what we think it means by what it says. It is our opinions, inferences, and deductions that are the problem. There is but one biblical answer to this: allow for differences, "forbearing one another in love." That is the way to unity.

Finally, a word about what it should mean to love Homer Hailey, as well as every other sister and brother. Whether he agrees or disagrees with us should have no bearing upon our love for him, for we love him because he is our brother in Christ. We love him because Christ first loved us, and the Lord did not wait until we "got right" and "lined up on the issues" before he loved us. To love a man means to leave him free to think, to question, to grow, to be his own person in the Lord. It means to leave him free to be wrong, for we are often wrong in our search for truth, and it may be something we have to go through to be right.

To love him means to encourage him to publish a book and get his ideas out in the market place. If he is wrong, he is more likely to discover it if his ideas are allowed to have free expression. And, in the end, to love him means to help him find his way if he is wrong, "with all longsuffering and teaching." And in all this we must make a difference in wrongs, for some wrongs are much more serious than others. Love hides of multitude of wrongs that do not matter all that much.

When we love like that love will not be a problem. And when we love like that we will find ourselves less sectarian. If to love like that means down with the party, then down with the party!—*the Editor*

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We Must Have Our Own Vatican II. . .

WHAT MUST THE CHURCH OF CHRIST DO TO BE SAVED? (5)

In our anti-Roman Catholic fervor through the years we Protestants have insisted that the Roman Catholic Church is impervious to change. Rome never changes, we have charged, perhaps with some justification. But Rome has made some dramatic changes in recent years, especially in their ecumenical council known as Vatican II in 1965. Measured in terms of centuries things happened at Vatican II that were wholly unpredictable and would have shocked the fathers of the church of ages past. Indeed, many were shocked in 1965, and are still shocked, causing some clergy to leave and start independent churches.

The leaders of Vatican II were persuaded after much debate that the Roman Catholic Church would have to make some significant changes if it was to relate to the demands of a 20th-century world. They recognized that the church must change or become irrelevant. They raised the same question about the Roman Church that I am raising about the Churches of Christ in this series: *What must the church do to be saved?*

In this installment of our series I am saying that for the Churches of Christ to be saved they must have their own Vatican II. It is not likely that we can effect change in our thinking and practice any more easily than the Roman Church. While change comes painfully and with difficulty, people can and will change when they see that they must do so to be saved. If Rome changed, so can we. What is remarkable about Vatican II is that it set in motion some of the very changes the Churches of Christ must make. That may be

because there are striking similarities between the two churches. A review of the changes wrought by Vatican II will point up what I mean.

The story of Vatican II began with a document called "Declaration of Religious Liberty," sometimes referred to as "the American document" because it was drawn up by an American Jesuit priest and theologian, John Courtney Murray. It sought to undo the sectarian spirit of an earlier document known as the "Syllabus of Errors," in which the Roman Church is depicted as the guardian of all truth while other Christians are viewed as "erring schismatics." The new document called on the Roman Church to recognize religious freedom for all people, and to create an atmosphere of a free and open search for truth in all its institutions.

Murray's document, which he nursed as a mother over a sick child through all the perils of debate and aggravated opposition, brought the Roman Church into a "consciousness of civilized mankind," as Murray put it, and it made the church more accepting of "historical consciousness." These are insights every Protestant church must gain, certainly Churches of Christ who have a way of ignoring history. For the Roman Church to resolve to be a defender of the cause of freedom, religious as well as political, was a change of staggering import.

But Murray's document called for specific changes in thought and practice that were after much controversy approved by the council and by the Pope. To recount these will serve to point up some mid-course changes that we should consider making.

1. *Doctrine does develop; dogma does change.*

We may have as much difficulty admitting this as did the fathers of Vatican II who were as steeped in tradition as ourselves. Murray did not mean, of course, that basic and essential doctrines of the Christian faith change, but that in the general teachings of the church on how to live in a changing world dogma may have to be revised. That the apostles would impose an order or procedure upon the ancient church does not necessarily mean that they would say the same thing to the 20th century church.

In Churches of Christ we need to ask some hard questions about our unchanging practice of male-dominated services, the subjugation of women in ministry, our position on divorce and remarriage, preacher-centered worship, our attitude toward modern biblical research, our polity and various methods of work, worship, and missions.

Murray and the renewal leaders at Vatican II may have first thought it hopeless that the Roman Church would ever conduct mass in English instead of the old Latin. But it was done, to the consternation of many. Could we make some meaningful changes in the way we celebrate the Lord's supper, such as women presiding and serving? The point is that we

must become open to that sort of thing. There is nothing wrong in a church saying, “We once believed that way but we don’t believe that way anymore; we once practiced that but we do so no longer.”

2. *Coercion in matters of conscience is utterly inappropriate.*

It may surprise you that Roman Catholic authorities at Vatican II supported this resolution: “Truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth, as it makes its entrance into the mind at once quietly and with power.” Sounding more like a Luther or a Campbell than like a Pope, they went on to say in that freedom document, “The exercise of religion, of its very nature, consists before all else in those internal, voluntary and free acts whereby man set the course of his life directly toward God. No merely human power can either command or prohibit acts of this kind.”

If you adjudge this as a welcome change for a church that has often through the centuries dominated by coercive means, you must also grant that we in Churches of Christ have also been coercive. If others have been papacy-dominated and church-dominated, we have been elder-dominated, dogma-dominated, tradition-dominated, editor-dominated. If the Roman Church has its written creeds we have had our unwritten creeds, and unwritten ones can be even more coercive and domineering than written ones.

I dare say we have fired more preachers, missionaries, and college professors for doctrinal infractions than the Pope has defrocked recalcitrant priests in a like period of time. And unlike the Roman church, which quietly moves a dissident priest or professor to another post or merely “silences” him, we shoot our wounded. We leave them stranded in mission fields without support. We fire professors while ignoring the right to due process. Once one is a “liberal” or a “false teacher” he or she has no rights. We shoot those among us that are hurting the most—the divorced, the honest dissenters, the sincere doubters. We bruise and batter those who call for change.

3. *We have at times acted” hardly in accord with the spirit of the Gospel and even opposed to it.”*

It is amazing that the authorities at Vatican II would look into their history with a critical eye and concede that in their methods they have sometimes been less than Christian, yea even anti-Christian. In this context they went on record declaring that the church should have no special privilege, but only “that full measure of freedom which her care for the salvation of men requires.”

If any church on earth needs to declare to the world that it has often been “hardly in accord with the spirit of the Gospel” and has violated the principles of the very Book it claims to honor, it is the Churches of Christ. While the Roman Church has pilloried the

schismatics we have skinned the sects. While we claim to believe in unity, we are the one church in the community that is known to have nothing to do with any other Christians. We are widely known as the people who think they are the only ones going to heaven and the only true Christians. The Roman Catholics in Rome in 1965 looked at themselves and said they had been wrong. Why can't the Churches of Christ do the same? To be saved we must have our own Vatican II.

4. *We extend our hand to all other Christians.*

For centuries the Roman Church labeled other Christians as "erring schismatics," but at Vatican II it went on record as acknowledging all other Christians as true brothers and sisters in Christ. It was especially mindful to reach out to the Eastern Churches (such as the Russian and Greek Orthodox), with whom there has been long centuries of bitter controversy and separation. The Orthodox churches are now seen as part of the universal (catholic) church.

While they were at it Vatican II made peace with the Jews, renouncing the long-standing dogma that all Jews past and present are collectively responsible for the crucifixion of Christ. They conceded that the crucifixion of our Lord cannot be blamed "upon all the Jews then living, without distinction, nor upon the Jews of today," and that the Jews cannot be considered as under some curse. To the contrary, Vatican II said, the Jews are under "God's all-embracing love" as are all people.

The Churches of Christ have been so rejecting of other Christians that they must do more than sign a document and make a proclamation, though that would help. We must do things like invite "denominational preachers" (a term we should quit using since we are all denominational) into our pulpits and joining with other churches in special programs. Our people would love it! This we can do without approving of any doctrine or practice that we believe to be wrong. We would simply be saying that since we all are following the Lord Jesus Christ the best we know how we want to help you and want you to help us to follow Christ more nearly, to know him more clearly, and to love him more dearly.

We must regard all other Christians as our equals, beginning right now. We must join with them and with each other in a new spirit of dialogue and mutual respect, a new freshness in perspective and interpretation. We must summons the courage to confront the problems of our own history. We must modernize the Churches of Christ, liberating ourselves from the mentality of the 1940's, and make our religion relevant to our day and time.

Since 1965 fresh air has been blowing through the Vatican windows in Rome. Things are not quite what they once were. Let fresh air blow through the windows of the Churches of Christ. It would be our Vatican II. We can do it. I don't care if you call it Nashville II—*the Editor*

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PRESERVING FRATERNAL RELATIONS

Edward Fudge

A brother from a part of the Lord's universal church different from my own recently wrote, upon reading my controversial book *The Fire That Consumes*, that he considered its thesis biblical and Christocentric, but found that stating such views can lead to problems. Part of his problem stems from the fact that one thing frequently leads to another, and some of his conclusions related to Last Things, such as the intermediate state and the nature of the new heavens and a new earth, now differ radically from the prevailing evangelical orthodoxy.

His "unorthodoxy," he finds, "is damaging fellowship with other Christians," making him a "pariah," he says. He wrote to me, he said, because he perceives me as one who has held a non-traditional view and yet maintained a good relationship with Christians as diverse as Robert Brinstead and F. F. Bruce. He wanted me to tell him how I manage to get along with those who differ with my views.

This good brother has a problem with which many of us can identify. The question he raises is an important one: How does one maintain fraternal relation with people who differ with him? My answer to him might prove helpful to others.

We must, first of all, I pointed out, focus on Jesus who is central to the faith of all true Christians. We can and must find our agreement in Jesus. But we must do more than give lip service to unity in Jesus. We must act upon what we say by welcoming as brothers and sisters all who love and trust Jesus as Savior.

Second, I observed, we must not become imbalanced in the doctrine we are emphasizing, but present it in proper proportion to other biblical teaching. We must avoid being one-sided or lopsided in our teaching. People will then see that we are not unreasonable or radical, and they will be more likely to consider a new idea. We must always be Bible-centered and always teach with love.

Third, when the other person is contentious it is helpful to say, “I do not ask you to agree with me, but only that you consider what I say in the light of the Bible, and then decide for yourself.” I learned that by example as well as by precept from my father, the late Bennie Lee Fudge. My father and I did not always agree, but he taught me to study for myself. He taught me to extend the same freedom to others that I assumed for myself. This attitude tends to disarm people who are expecting a contentious debate.

Fourth, we should be teachable, willing to learn from others. An openness to learn as well as to teach goes a long way.

Finally, I recommended to the brother that we should make service and loving ministry our main concern, and let doctrine fit into that in a natural way. The mark of the true disciple is love, Jesus shows us, not knowledge. Paul teaches us that knowledge without love is as useless as tongues or prophecy without love. While we are always to grow in grace and knowledge, we are to do so in a Christ-like way.

When we have done all this, I advised my friend, we still might not be extended the right hand of fellowship by some. When this happens, we must recognize this as their problem and not ours. While we regret the loss of fellowship, we are not responsible for it. We are to love them nonetheless and seek to learn from them.

As Carl Ketcherside used to say, “God will probably wash all our brains before he allows us through the gates to the Eternal City, so we can look forward to having none of these problems there.”

I hope that while we are yet on earth these thoughts will help us to better obey our Lord’s teaching to pursue peace with all people—*Box 218026, Houston, TX. 77218*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

There is high drama taking place just outside our kitchen window. Ouida watched as a cardinal built her nest in a bush but a few feet from where she works. There are now seven eggs in the little nest, which she faith-fully tends. Ouida notices that the male cardinal, with his bright red plumage, doesn’t come near the nest, and she wonders if he instinctively knows that his presence might reveal its location to predators. The mother bird, with its drab red feathers, is beautifully camouflaged. Even so she approaches the nest warily and indirectly. Ouida notices that the male will call from a nearby tree and the

two will meet and flyaway for breakfast, but not for long. Ouida can hardly wait for the little ones to break out of their shells, and she wonders how there will be room for all of them. In the meantime she stands guard, scaring away the neighbor's cat when it ventures too close. But there's a problem. The nest is near our air-conditioning unit, and Ouida fears it would frighten the mother if we turned it on. I have checked with a friend who is an ornithologist, and he has assured me that the noise will not disturb her, that city birds are used to noises. But Ouida had rather that we endure the heat than to take a chance. Wars have been fought before over less things than a bird's nest!

This month Mother Pitts turns 95 and Ouida begins her tenth year in caring for her. While she is usually rational and knows who we are, she is incredibly weak and frail, hardly able to take steps even with help. Ouida marvels that she can be so weak and yet so free of any pain or illness. She takes no medicine or pills, but Ouida has a problem trying to feed her, even with a syringe. Ouida still has a day out once a week while I care for her mother. She shops and meets with "the girls" for what is supposed to be Bible study, but they mainly enjoy being with each other and swapping stories. They also get prayer requests, which figures, considering the unique quality of the group.

I saw a touching thing recently when I visited the Central Christian Church in Kansas City, KS, now an inner-city church, while attending a planning session of the World Convention of Churches of Christ. A small choir rendered special music, mostly old people in an ageing church. One of them was an aged blind man who sang heartily unto the Lord as his fingers moved over the braille notes he had prepared. In spite of age and darkness he sang as if he saw heaven open up before him. A man sitting near me, also a visitor, was so touched that he wept.

John Wright reports in the bulletin of the Burke Road Church of Christ in Houston that several of their members took part in daily gatherings during Holy Week at the First Methodist Church. People from 20 different congregations took part. Five preachers from as many denominations addressed those that gathered. Not one of them spoke with a sectarian agenda. Each one pointed to the Cross. The experience led John to write of "that Truth" that unites us as far greater than all the various "truths" that divide us, regardless of how important they may be. He could have added that when we have such experiences even the lesser truths do not have to compromised. There is reason for hope that one day such experiences will be widespread among Churches of Christ. Our people would go for it!

The Assemblies of God have not always had a good press. They were at first known as "Holy Rollers," a pejorative term applied to all Pentecostals. In more recent years they have become known by their less-than-exemplary tele-evangelists, Jim Bakker and Jimmy

Swaggart, both of whom lost their credentials with the church. What is not generally known is that the Assemblies have been growing by leaps and bounds, especially abroad, while many other churches are stagnating. They have 16 million members abroad, especially in Latin America. They now have two million in the U.S., which is a fourfold growth in the last twenty years.

The United Presbyterians are in the throes of controversy over the report of their committee for the study of human sexuality, which recommends that all sexuality based on "justice-love" be honored as having ethical integrity. This includes single as well as married persons, and gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons as well as heterosexual persons. The moral norm, the report says, should be justice-love, not marriage. It specifically states that homosexual love, no less and no more than heterosexual love, is right and good. The Presbyterian For Renewal, who have their own publication, as well as many others in the church, are horrified and shocked that Presbyterians could issue such a report, and charge the committee of ignoring the Scriptures. The church's General Assembly, which meets this summer, is expected to reject the report by a huge majority. But the issue is not expected to go away and may either divide the church or cause many to leave. Christians generally are more open to a call to love and accept homosexuals, but to ask them to approve of their "alternate life-style" as God-ordained is too much.

I am to be with the Elm Street Christian Church (727 E. Elm) in Olney, Illinois for the weekend of May 24-26, including a Saturday a.m. session. The subject will be the hope of the believer. We have many readers in that part of the country, and it would be a blessing to see some of you. Call Jerry Black at 618-393-29033 (office) or 618-392-3901 (home) for details.

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READER'S EXCHANGE

I was surprised and sad to see that your *The Stone-Campbell Movement* is out of print. I gave my copy to missionaries who had just returned from the Philippines, who were delighted to get it. Since I am in my 80's I probably will never get another copy, even if it is reprinted. Thanks for the enjoyment I have had through the years of Restoration Review.—*Florence Bonham, Columbus, Oh.*

Thank you for blessing our family and all whom you've reached over the years. To pilfer Bush's paradigm of "a thousand points of light," you and your paper are one of the brightest.—*Pat Flynn, Nashville, Tn.*

I am now with an instrumental church. I am amazed how much the instrumental and non-instrumental churches are alike. The estrangement over the instrument is sad indeed. The more fellowship we have with each other the more we will realize our similarities, which is due to a common parentage. Pray for me that Christian unity will always be my polar star.—*Randall Massey, Howard, Pa.*

What you are saying in "What Must the Church of Christ Do to be Saved" has needed to be said for a long time. We hope many changes will take place because of it.—*Ken and Ramona Brown, Paradise, Ca.*

We have been doing a lot of sharing with a friend who is experiencing the typical treatment accorded those in the Church of Christ who begin to think for themselves. He was not acquainted with the work that you and Carl Ketcherside have done over the years, so I introduced him and he can't get enough! How many lives you and Carl have blessed and freed over the years!—*James Ledbetter, Birmingham, AL.*

The Spirit is moving among Churches of Christ, the winds of change are blowing. I hope it is not too late.—*Tony Thompson, Murray, KY.*

Your series on "What Must the Church of Christ Do to be Saved?" is as thought-provoking as anything I've read. It should be reprinted in our church bulletins. I especially like the proclamation of repentance, and endorse it wholeheartedly.—*Chuck Weinsheimer, Doylestown, Oh.*

On what the Church of Christ must do to be saved, right on, Leroy! I'll sign the proclamation!—*Virginia Adams, Las Cruces, NM*

I don't see how you can cut off your paper entirely upon retirement. You won't be happy to do that, now will you? I wonder what Ouida does for exercise. Does she take walks while you take runs? She makes one helluva assistant editor and secretary. (Publish that one!)—*Joan Morrison, Columbus, Oh.*

(Yes, I probably will not be happy if I quit writing entirely. I'm thinking about what to do about that. Ouida gets exercise aplenty by climbing the stairs all day to her mother's room—and by guarding the cardinal's nest!—*Ed.*)

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BOOK NOTES

Since there will be only 15 more issues of this journal, the Dec. 1992 issue being the final number, we would appreciate your help in giving these the widest circulation possible. We have two extended series going, one on the Old Testament and one on what the Church of Christ must do to be saved. You know people that would be helped by both of these. You can bless others and help us all by sending us a list of such folk. You get the club rate of only $4.00 per name for 10 issues ($6 each for the remaining 15 issues) in lists of four or more, which may include your own renewal. Since renewals will drop off during our last year, we can use some help from those who love us the most.

We will continue to dispose of our back issues at less-than-cost, and we expect more demand for these as we wind down. While they last the price is 15 copies for $4.00 or 25 copies for $6.00, postpaid, selected at random by us for many years back. If you select the ones you want, the price is 40 cents each, plus postage, if we have them.

We are pleased with the looks of our new bound volume of this journal for 1989-90, titled *The Hope of the Believer.* We have mailed a copy to each one that reserved one. The price is $15.00 postpaid.

We expect to have Carl Ketcherside's autobiography, *Pilgrimage of Joy,* later this year. The prepublication price is $15.00, and we advise that you reserve a copy to make sure you get one.

We were also able to get more copies of another book that is going out of print, but highly worth reading. *Grace Thus Far* by David H. C. Read is the story of a preacher who was a chaplain prisoner of war during WWII, then pastor in Britain and America. His story is a learning experience, especially if you are a preacher. It would make an ideal little gift for a preacher. His chapter on "The Politics of the Pastor" will at least confirm that you are not alone in what you have to put up with. But his experience seems to make it less difficult. Usually $8.95, we can offer it at $6.95 postpaid.

Another "learning" book that will really stretch your mind is *How Karl Barth Changed My Mind.* When 26 scholars tell how one man changed their thinking, and in what way, it is worth reading. One theologian reports that he really came to see what "good news" is by reading Barth. Part of the book shows how Barth greatly influenced others because his own mind kept changing. I should give a complimentary copy to the old Church of Christ minister who proudly affirmed that he had not changed his mind about anything for 50 years! $10.50 post-paid.

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